

## 2012 SBC ANNUAL MEETING



**PHASE AND WORSHIP** — Members of the Sanctuary Choir of First Church, Jackson, perform June 19 in a combined choir with six other churches at the 2012 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

## Messengers elect Luter, approve name descriptor

**NEW ORLEANS (BP and local reports)** — Messengers to the 2012 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) June 19-20 in New Orleans witnessed one of the most momentous gatherings of the nation's largest Protestant denomination in its 167-year history, electing the body's first African American president and voting to approve a descriptor, "Great Commission Baptists," for those churches that wish to use it with or without including "Southern Baptist Convention."

For the first time in many years, a Mississippi Baptist was nominated for SBC office. Eric Hankins, senior pastor of First Church, Oxford, was defeated for second vice-president by David Miller, pastor of Southern Hills Church in Sioux City, Iowa. Miller replaced Fred Luter Jr., who was elected SBC president.

Nathan Lino, senior pastor of Northeast Houston Church in Humble, Texas, was elected first vice president. He replaced Eric Thomas, senior pastor of First Church, Norfolk, Va., and former senior pastor of First Church, Vicksburg.

John Yeatts, executive director of the Missouri Baptist Con-



**NEW PRESIDENT** — Fred Luter Jr., pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans, responds to a question at a press conference held shortly after his June 19 election as the first African-American president of the Southern Baptist Convention, during the convention's 2012 annual meeting in New Orleans. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

tion, was re-elected recording secretary. Jim Wells, Cooperative Program state missionary for strategic partnerships with the Missouri Baptist Convention, was re-elected registration secretary.

Total registered messengers at the 2012 annual meeting num-

bered 7868. Mississippi Baptist churches sent 792 messengers to the annual meeting, second only to Louisiana Baptists' 943 messengers.

The 2012 annual meeting brought more than the usual number of news media from across the

nation to see the election of Luter, a descendent of slaves who now is the president of a convention whose founders defended slavery at its inception in 1845.

The convention officially repented of its racist past at the 1995 annual meeting, and has seen the percentage of non-white churches grow from five percent of the SBC in 1990 to 19% in 2010.

Last year, messengers approved a landmark report encouraging ethnic diversity in SBC committee appointments.

Luter, who was unopposed and received a lengthy standing ovation from messengers when elected, told reporters at a news conference shortly after his election that he sees being a turning point for blacks and other ethnic groups in relation to the SBC.

"Here is a convention that has been talking this racial reconciliation thing and now they're putting their money where their mouth is," said Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans, whose building was flooded after Hurricane Katrina but has been rebuilt into a mega-church amid the city's much-reduced population.

Luter called his election "a genuine, authentic move by

this convention that says our doors are open." He also said he hopes to see minorities promoted to other positions within the convention.

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JUL 06 2012



## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### The Big Story (and others)

There's no disputing that the biggest story to come out of the 2012 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) last week in New Orleans was the elevation of Fred Luter Jr. from first vice-president to president of the convention. It was the biggest story because Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans, happens to be the first African-American to lead a convention founded 167 years ago in large part to defend and preserve the slave status of his forebears in America.

That's the news "peg" on which hung most of the secular and religious news media reports from New Orleans, but there's much more to be said about the annual meeting and its implications for the future.

First, a primer for the news media, national and otherwise, and for more than a few Baptists. Fred Luter didn't parachute into Southern Baptist life last week. He was in a fixture in Southern Baptist circles since he was called 26 years ago to pastor Franklin Avenue Church, a declining church in a transitional neighborhood that was down to 65 members and on the verge of closing its doors. With a lot of help from key people in the congregation over the years, Luter has led Franklin Avenue Church to megachurch status with over 5,000 members and satellite campuses in Baton Rouge and Houston (Texas).

Along the way, he has preached tirelessly in countless SBC churches, state Baptist convention gatherings, and just about anywhere else on the globe from whence an invitation has come. He has also served on just about every SBC board in existence. Mississippi Baptists consider him a native son, since his grandparents lived in Waltham County outside Tyler, Texas.

The point is, Fred Luter is no token. His election was not a fluke. He was not plucked from obscurity, as some inside and outside our ranks have alleged, to serve as window dressing for Southern Baptists' attempt to corral growing African American churches while the predominantly white churches in the convention continue to decline.

No, Fred Luter is the genuine item. He's one of us, and he loves Southern Baptists. If his election proves anything, it is that Southern Baptists have reached the point where nothing else matters — *nothing* — as much as our passion for fulfilling our Lord and Savior's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). It's about time, too.

There were other significant happenings at this most significant annual meeting. Messengers approved what proponents called a "descriptor" add-on name for the convention: Great Commission Baptists. The convention will still be legally and formally known as the Southern Baptist Convention, and churches are of course free to use (or not use) the new descriptor as they see fit.

Most people in the mainline SBC states probably don't see the need to have a descriptor, but many Baptists outside the South believe it will help dispel some of the perceived negative impressions and regional limitations of the legal and formal name of the convention. There are disagreements over how deeply those perceived negative impressions and regional limitations actually hinder the work of the convention, but at any rate the new descriptor is now the policy of the convention.

It has become increasingly obvious that Southern Baptists are drawing battle lines over the issue of Calvinism. Conversation in the hallways during the annual meeting in New Orleans, as well as sermons and introductions and debates on several resolutions and motions, bore that out. Southern Baptists would be wise to educate themselves on Calvinism and its core doctrines, the full extent of which cannot be encapsulated within the limited space of this column, and be prepared as the issue continues to bubble to the surface in so many Baptist venues.

It seems as if "infussing" and infighting are a way of life for Southern Baptists, and there likely won't be any let-up over Calvinism. We can pray and seek God's will, however. That's been known to work in the past in a lot of areas of Southern Baptist life.

#### No issue next week

Due to postal regulations that limit The Baptist Record to 50 issues per year, the news journal of the Mississippi Baptist Convention does not publish on the weeks of July 4 and Christmas. There will therefore be no issue of The Baptist Record on Thursday, July 5. The next scheduled issue is Thursday, July 12. Regular deadlines for news and advertisements for the issue of July 12 remain in effect. For more information, please contact the news staff at (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

## The state of American morality

A newly released Gallup poll taking America's moral temperature finds strong support for fidelity in marriage and increasing respect for unborn life, but in other key areas — specifically sex outside of marriage and homosexuality — Americans may have lost their biblical compass.

According to the Gallup organization's annual Values and Beliefs survey, 73% of the nation's citizens believe moral values are getting worse (up from 69% in 2011). This sense of moral malaise is generalized rather than specific with no one issue reaching even 25% as the number one issue.

When Gallup focused on the specifics, however, sexual behavior became the battleground.

Biblically speaking, the best news coming from the values survey is that a majority of Americans still have tremendous respect for marriage. Not only do Americans overwhelmingly reject adulterous behavior in married spouses, they reject polygamy by an 81% to seven percent margin.

Pro-life Americans should be encouraged from Gallup's findings that 41% of Americans identify as pro-choice, down six percent from last year and one percent lower than Gallup has ever recorded. Similarly, 50% identify as pro-life, one point below the previous record.

The pro-choice decline is evident in all three major American political groupings — Republican, Independent, and Democrat. Republicans lead the way (72%) followed by Independents where pro-life (47%) now outnumbered pro-choice (41%). Among Democrats, pro-choice has declined (68% to 58%) in the past year while "pro-life" has increased (27% to 34%).

When sex between an unmarried man and woman is morally acceptable by a 59% to 38% margin, but married men and women having an affair is morally unacceptable by a whopping 89% to seven percent, you have a morally confused culture but one that still somewhat respects marital vows.

Then there is pornography. Given the tremendous growth of the pornography industry with the rise of the Internet and its negative impact on our mainstream entertainment, the low numbers on approval of pornography are, for the moment, encouraging. As destructive as pornography is to individuals and to relationships, it is comforting to hear that only 31% of Americans find viewing pornography morally acceptable and twice as many (64%) do not.



**Guest opinion**  
with Richard Land

Some would say that it is a sign of moral decline itself when people view "only" 31% finding pornography morally acceptable as a good sign.

It is true that the rampant presence of ever more explicit pornography has severely impacted the nation's morals and led to ever greater acceptance of ever more deviant material but, at the most, acceptance of pornography at least lags behind unmarried sex and gay/lesbian relations (59% and 54%, respectively, calling each morally acceptable) on the nation's moral compass.

If pornography ever reaches these levels of moral acceptability in American society, then all the other non-traditional behaviors will increase to much higher levels. Hardcore pornography's ability to redefine moral deviance down to an ever-lower new normal is truly as dangerous as it is impressive.

Americans who want to see moral reformation, or re-formation, in their culture should do all they can to confront and minimize pornography's impact on the nation's citizens, especially its young people. Pornography is the propaganda for a paganized sexual morality which will submerge our culture in a tidal wave of sexual deviance if uncontested and uncontrolled.

Every church, temple, mosque, and synagogue in America should consciously seek to be part of a pornography-free counter culture which attempts to inoculate its membership in age-applicable ways against pornography's seductive blandishments. In so doing, religious Americans of all persuasions can help insure that the 31% morally acceptable rate on pornography goes down rather than up in the future.

*Land is president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for length. Land may be contacted at rland@erlc.com.*

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## MISSIONS NEWS



WANDA LEE

# WMU introduces new curricula, tagline at New Orleans meeting

**NEW ORLEANS (BP)** — Missions education and involvement for boys, a new tagline, and social media were the focus of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) report to the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting June 19 in New Orleans.

WMU Executive Director/Treasurer Wanda Lee said the return to WMU of responsibilities for Royal Ambassadors and Challengers will benefit local churches and provide a more coordinated curriculum for children in missional discipleship while streamlining requests for resources.

"Over the last few years, NAMB [North American Mission Board] and WMU staffs have collaborated on resources for Girls in Action and Royal Ambassadors, but this transition presents the opportunity to do even more," Lee said in her June 19 report.

"Beginning in September, each month RA and GA will share the same missionary feature and Bible story, but the teaching plans and overall look and feel will be very gender-specific. We recognize there is such a short window of opportunity for shaping young minds to be missions-focused and we are fully committed to effectively discipling children and students in Southern Baptist missions."

WMU President Debby Akerman said WMU offers missions education for all ages and both genders, including involvement through Mission Friends, GA, RA, Acteens, Challengers,

Women on Mission, and other missions organizations.

"Missions for Life," WMU's new tagline, speaks to the fact that whatever your age or stage in life, WMU has missions resources just for you," Akerman said. "While missions education is vitally important as we train the next generation to serve Christ, WMU seeks to equip all ages for missions involvement so others may hear of Jesus, the giver of eternal life."

"Missions discipleship through WMU helps instill serving others and sharing the love of Christ as a part of our daily lives."

WMU is actively using social media to keep missions at the forefront of people's minds and lives, Lee said. In addition to print and online resources, every team at national WMU has embraced social media including Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, and Instagram as means for sharing missions information.

"Whatever method of communication you prefer, we want to engage you in a two-way conversation about missions," Lee said. "We are here to serve you and to help you and your church be involved in the mission of God and stay informed about the many ways God is at work around our world."

During this year's WMU Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting on June 18, Akerman was unanimously re-elected to a third term as national president and Rosalie Hunt of Guntersville, Al., was re-elected to a fourth term as national recording secretary.

## GuideStone convention report notes awards and ratings, Mission: Dignity

**NEW ORLEANS (BP)** — GuideStone Financial Resources President O.S. Hawkins, in his report to messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, cited William Lunsford, the Southern Baptist entity's founder, and his first report to messengers.

"In 1918," Hawkins said, "our founder William Lunsford stood before this group and made this pledge to the pastors, 'Give yourself wholeheartedly to the work. We'll stand back of you. If you fall in the work we'll care for you; if you die, we will not allow your family to suffer. If you grow old in the work, we'll comfort you in your declining years.'"

"We've never gotten away from our founder's vision," Hawkins said.

**O.S. Hawkins**  
president

GuideStone Financial Resources

### Performance

The Wall Street Journal, Thomson Reuters, and Investment News honored GuideStone Funds March 8 in New York City with the 2012 Lipper Award for Best Overall Small Fund Group in the U.S., rating the funds No. 1 out of 182 eligible companies with up to \$40 billion in assets.

"William Lunsford would rejoice with us today in the incredible investment success that God has given to GuideStone, receiving the highest honors in the investment world," Hawkins said.

Additionally, ratings firm F360 ranked GuideStone Funds No. 1 out of 223 mutual fund families for the quarter ending March 31, 2012.

### Healthcare

While citing the addition of Cigna to the group plan options offered by GuideStone, Hawkins acknowledged that the biggest news regarding healthcare revolved around the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, commonly known as ObamaCare.

"Many of you know that the Catholics have taken a litigation route related to this," Hawkins said. "We're taking a legislative route with other denominational pension funds, working side-by-side trying to get legislation that is going to fix some of the things that are involved in this. We're also trying to work with the administration."

While emphasizing that GuideStone seeks to work legislatively and administratively, Hawkins said GuideStone would not compromise its core convictions.

"I was talking to our new [SBC] president a moment ago and I asked Fred Luter when he goes to Washington, as he surely will very soon, to take a message from us, and that is: GuideStone Financial Resources will never allow this administration to tell us that we have to provide abortifacient drugs like morning-after pills or provide for same-sex marriages," Hawkins said to applause in the hall.

### Property/Casualty

Hawkins discussed a new partnership with Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company to provide property and casualty insurance.

"Give yourself wholeheartedly to the work. We'll stand back of you. If you fall in the work we'll care for you; if you die, we will not allow your family to suffer. If you grow old in the work, we'll comfort you in your declining years. We've never gotten away from our founder's vision."

"We found a real partner in Brotherhood Mutual," Hawkins said. Citing their similar age and heritage to GuideStone and calling them "our Anabaptist cousins," Hawkins said Brotherhood Mutual is one of the top property and casualty leaders in the nation.

### Mission: Dignity

June 24 marks Mission: Dignity Sunday across the SBC. Hawkins said last year's giving set new records, including 1,000 new first-time givers, even in a bad economy. Mission: Dignity provides for retired SBC ministers and their widows, providing financial support for those in need.

"If you're here today and a pastor and seated by a sweet lady who has served with you for decades, and God takes you to heaven, we're going to take care of her until she meets you there," Hawkins said.

In comments at the close of the report, outgoing SBC President Bryant Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Church in Marietta, Ga., said his church has embraced a giving method for Mission: Dignity as part of their benevolence offering.

"Whenever we have the Lord's Supper, which is about once a month, we have a benevolence offering for people inside and outside the church who have come upon difficult financial times," Wright said. "We have been able to allow for a portion of that offering each year to go to Mission: Dignity."

"It is something your church can easily do if you have a benevolence offering to designate a portion to Mission: Dignity."

In addition, Hawkins announced that two books, *The Pastor's Guide to Leading & Living*, and *The Joshua Code: 52 Scripture Verses Every Believer Should Know*, are available through Christian and online retailers, with all royalties and proceeds benefiting Mission: Dignity.

*Pastor's Guide* is available now. *Joshua Code* will be available in August, but is available for pre-order at popular online bookstores.

Hawkins also made reference to GuideStone's expanding presence in social media. Twitter users can follow @OSHawkins for ministry tools, tips, sermon outlines, personal reflections, and links to helpful educational materials.

# SBC

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cheerleader promoting that."

About 7,900 registered messengers attended the annual meeting, and nearly every one of them — plus family members and several dozen newsmedia representatives — were in a packed convention hall when Luter was elected.

David Crosby, pastor of First Church, New Orleans, nominated Luter, and SBC recording secretary John Yeats cast the convention's official ballot in favor of the unopposed Luter.

"It is my high honor to cast this historic ballot of the convention for Dr. Fred Luter as president of the Southern Baptist Convention," Yeats said before adding, "Hallelujah!"

Yeats' expression seemed appropriate for a historic day, and messengers responded with an emotional 70-second standing ovation. With cameras flashing as Luter walked to the podium, he pointed heavenward and, while wiping away tears, said simply, "To God be the glory for the things that He has done."

Outgoing SBC President Bryant Wright then put his arm around Luter and prayed for him.

Luter's election came with a coincidence: He was elected on June 19, or "Juneteenth," a yearly date in which many African Americans celebrate the emancipation of slaves. His election also came as Americans commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

"This is not just an Anglo convention," Luter told news media members. "...I'm Exhibit A that this convention is serious about saying that our doors are open to everyone. I hope to be a spokesperson to that, because let's face it: There are some African Americans, maybe Asians or Hispanics, who for years felt that they were not welcome in the Southern Baptist Convention. That's not the case anymore."

Two days prior to Luter's election, several hundred Southern Baptist messengers visiting New Orleans — most of them white — attended Luter's church, wanting to see him and the congregation he had helped rebuild.

At the close of the second service, Luter called on Jimmy Draper, retired long time Texas pastor and former president of LifeWay Christian Resources, to pray. Prior to his prayer Draper addressed Franklin Avenue church members, referencing Luter's pending election and telling them to applaud, "This is not tokenism. ...We're electing a great leader who happens to be black."

The convention has made several moves in recent years in an attempt to reach out to ethnic groups, including the establishment by the SBC Executive Committee and the North American Mission Board of an African American Advisory Council and a Hispanic Advisory Council.

Last year's ethnic diversity report cited the "need to be proac-

tive and intentional in the inclusion of individuals from all ethnic and racial identities within Southern Baptist life."

Luter told the media he wants to see the convention become even more diverse during his presidency. He also said he wants to spotlight evangelism and missions and help bring together factions within the convention.

Luter, who grew up in the New Orleans ninth ward, has Mississippi roots. His grandparents lived outside Tylertown in Walthall County.

## Descriptor adopted

Passage of the descriptor, "Great Commission Baptists," was closer than some had expected. The proposal came via a recommendation from the SBC Executive Committee, which had proposed it after a task force appointed by Wright studied whether to change the name of the convention.

In the end, the task force recommended the convention keep its name but also adopt the descriptor that can be used voluntarily by any Southern Baptist church.

Messengers debated the descriptor for about a half-hour before approving it, 53-46%.

The task force said the descriptor would be beneficial to churches and church planters outside the South, as well as to ethnic churches whose members might negatively view the name, "Southern Baptist." Some church planters say the convention's regional name is a barrier.

## Mississippi Baptists

A number of Mississippi Baptists were on the annual meeting program, including:

■ Stan Buckley, executive director of But God Ministries in Jackson and former senior pastor of First Church, Jackson, who served as chairman of the SBC Committee on Order of Business.

■ John Barnes, pastor of Oak Grove Church, Mize, who delivered the benediction at the June 19 morning session.

■ Frankie Clark, senior pastor of First Church, Taylorsville, who offered prayer during the June 20 morning session.

■ Mark Vincent, pastor of Clark-Venable Church in Decatur, who delivered the benediction at the June 20 morning session.

■ Daniel Heeringa, pastor of First Church, Houston, who served on the Tellers Committee.

## Calvinism

The issue of Calvinism also was addressed from the platform several times, with each speaker urging messengers to remain united for the Great Commission.

SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page, who said he's not a Calvinist, addressed each side of the debate. He told the non-Calvinists: "There seems to be some non-Calvinists who are more concerned about rooting

out Calvinists than they are about winning the lost for Christ."

He then addressed Calvinists, some of whom he said "seem to think that if we do not believe the same thing about soteriology [the study of the doctrine of salvation] that they believe then, somehow we are less intelligent or ignorant."

"I do believe we can find some ways to work together better," Page said, "and I believe that the leaders of both of these groups can come together to say, 'Here's how we can return to working together like we once did.'"

Page confirmed again that he plans to assemble a group of advisers to help chart a way through the division surrounding Calvinism, but he said that will not include revising the Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptists' statement of beliefs.

Wright also addressed the issue in his convention sermon. "Our calling is to be centered on Christ and grounded in the Word, while agreeing to disagree on the finer points of theological issues," Wright said. "May we all agree that Christ... has given us a very clear message and mission for the church."

He added, "If we pride ourselves more on being a traditional Southern Baptist or more on being a Calvinist or a Reformed theologian, more than we are thankful that we are Christ-centered and biblically based... then it is time to repent of theological idolatry."

Messengers also overwhelmingly passed a resolution titled, "On Cooperation and the Doctrine of Salvation," which said in part, "We affirm that The Baptist Faith and Message provides sufficient parameters for understanding the doctrine of salvation, so that Southern Baptists may joyfully and enthusiastically partner together in obedience to the Great Commission."

## Board reports

International Mission Board President Tom Elliff reported on the progress of IMB's Embrace challenge, issued at the 2011 SBC in Phoenix, where he called on Southern Baptist churches to claim responsibility for evangelizing all of the world's then-3,800 unreached, unengaged people groups (UUPGs).

Elliff said 1,281 Southern Baptist churches and entities have indicated an interest in embracing a UUPG. Of that number, 474 churches and entities have taken steps to go deeper in that commitment.

"It means some of you are tak-

ing this really seriously, and you're saying we want to count the cost, we want to see what's involved," he said. "I want to tell you on behalf of the International Mission Board, we're absolutely thrilled."

"We welcome you to the field, we rejoice that you've taken up this mantle, and we praise God that the Kingdom is being expanded because of your involvement."

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is headquartered in Richmond, Va., and supports more than 5,000 missionaries and their families on fields throughout the world.

North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell encouraged congregations to get involved in planting churches and supporting church planters. To underscore the urgency, he quoted statistics showing that in some states in the Northeast, Midwest, and the North West, there is only one Southern Baptist church for every 20,000-plus people. In Canada, it's one in 117,000, he said.

By comparison, the ratio in the South is one in less than 10,000.

"Church planting is an evangelistic strategy," Ezell said. NAMB has a goal for Southern Baptists to plant a net of 5,000 new churches by 2022, Ezell said. When churches that close each year are included, that means Southern Baptists must plant 13,500 new churches.

"We will never be able to plant that many churches unless God does a work in His people," Ezell said.

## Resolutions

Messengers approved resolutions reaffirming their convictions regarding the means of salvation and the inerrancy of Scripture, while indicating their intention to continue cooperating in the Great Commission despite some theological differences.

Among the nine resolutions passed in two sessions were those:

■ Identifying what is frequently described as a "sinner's prayer" as a biblical way of expressing repentance and faith while provid-

ing some careful descriptions of what that means.

Eric Hankins proposed the resolution, which underwent some rewording by the SBC Resolutions Committee before being presented to messengers.

■ Reaffirming the belief the Bible is without error and attesting to the direct creation of and historicity of Adam and Eve.

■ Agreeing to continue to work together to spread the Gospel with an understanding that the Baptist Faith and Message, the convention's confession of faith, sets "sufficient parameters for understanding the doctrine of salvation" among Southern Baptists.

The resolution on cooperation addressed some pre-convention verbal sparring between non-Calvinists and Calvinists, Resolutions Committee Chairman Jimmy Scroggins acknowledged afterward.

■ Opposing efforts to use the rhetoric of the African American civil rights movement in the attempt to legalize same sex marriage.

■ Protesting the Obama administration's attempts to subvert religious freedom in such arenas as health care, marriage, and the military.

■ Acknowledging and expressing gratitude for the role of African Americans in Baptist work in the United States.

■ Affirming community and human needs ministries by churches.

■ Celebrating the 200th anniversary this year of Baptist ministry in Louisiana.

■ Expressing appreciation to God and all those who helped with this year's annual meeting.

Messengers approved the resolution on a sinner's prayer with what appeared to be at least an 80% majority. The other measures gained passage in unanimous or nearly unanimous votes.

The committee sought to emphasize cooperation, said Scroggins, senior pastor of First Church in West Palm Beach, FL. That seemed obvious in the resolutions on a sinner's prayer and cooperation between Calvinists and non-Calvinists.

The explicit intention "from the time our committee started meeting was to try to present resolutions in a way that we could be winsome, that we could say strong things in a winsome way and do it in a way that promoted unity among Southern Baptists," Scroggins said at a news conference after the completion of the resolutions reports.

The way the committee put it was it "wanted to 'demilitarize'



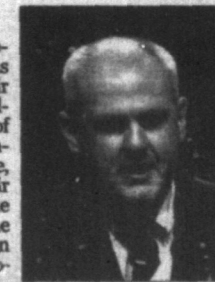
BUCKLEY



BARNES



CLARK



VINCENT

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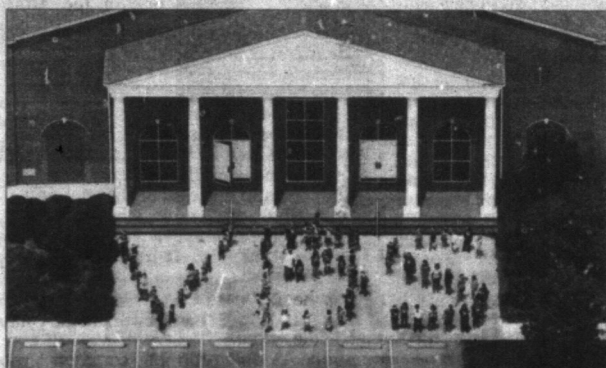
# Vacation Bible School



**BETHEL CHURCH, MONTICELLO**, recognizes its three-year-old VBS class. Shown are Tina Reid, Layton Ervin, Brelynn Wilson, Melanie Rogers, Annabella Smithie, Debbie Koontz, and Brooke Smith.



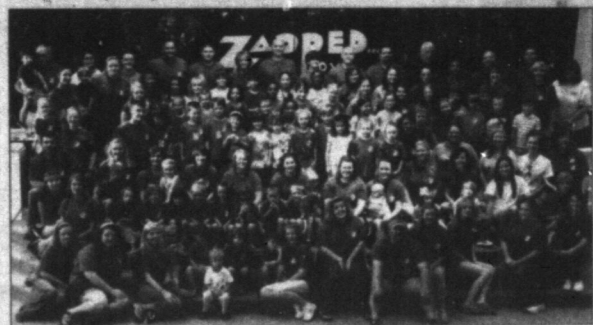
**DELAY ROAD CHURCH, YALOBUSHA ASSOCIATION**: June 3 - 7, with 17 children enrolled and 12 average attendance.



**GASTON CHURCH, BOONEVILLE**, held VBS June 11 - 15. The teachers and students formed a large VBS outside the church for this photo taken from a plane.



**GILLSBURG CHURCH, GILLSBURG**, held VBS June 10 - 14. A partially restored 1964 Cessna 150 was provided by Ronnie and Jane Travis, members of the church.



**CALVARY CHURCH, OAK GROVE**, recently held VBS, with an average attendance of 75.



**ROLLING HILLS CHURCH, CARRIERE**, recently held VBS, with an average of 23 workers and teen helpers (shown), ministering to 26 children. The children collected over \$240 for the Baptist Children's Village.

**ELLARD CHURCH, CALHOUN COUNTY ASSOCIATION**, held VBS June 11 - 15. Shown are the participants.



## Upcoming Vacation Bible Schools:

- **Bethel Church, Columbus**: July 9 - 13, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; family night, Friday; ages 3 - 6th grade; for information, call (662) 327-2111.
- **Unity Church, Leakesville**: July 16 - 20, 6:30 - 9 p.m., ages K - 6th grade.
- **Mesa Church, Tylertown**: July 9 - 13, 3 - 6 p.m.; for more information, call (601) 876-0872.
- **Victory Church, Lincoln Association**: July 8 - 12; commencement, July 13, 6:30 p.m. followed by fellowship.
- **Immanuel Church, Greenwood**: July 9 - 13, 5:30 - 8 p.m., with supper provided; for information, call (662) 453-8242.
- **First Church, Marion**: July 9 - 13, 9 - 11:30 a.m.; 3 years - 6th grade; for information, call (601) 485-9503.
- **Macedonia Church, Lee County**: July 9 - 13, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; nursery - 6th grade.

**T**he wise man of the Old Testament, Solomon, spent a great deal of his time pondering the mysteries of life. He was intrigued with human relationships and he was fascinated by the animal world all around him. Solomon commands the lazy person, the slug-gard, to go and watch the ant. Creative and industrious that little creature struggles with burdens larger than it is and spends a great deal of its time preparing and storing food for the days when there will be nothing available. Solomon wants us to know that even the tiny little ant has the wisdom to be prepared for when the difficult times come. Now the reason for this article is not to give an exposition on Solomon's dealing with the animal world, but to give consideration to the problem of why dogs chase cars.

One Saturday afternoon I was listening to this fellow, Warren Eckstein, who comes on the radio and calls his program, *The Pet Show*. Obviously, this fellow knows a lot about the animal world. I do not know how he knows what he knows, and it seems to me that some of the things that he knows could only be found out by talking to the animals themselves.

As I was listening to him, someone called in and wanted to know about why dogs chase cars. This person had a particular interest because they had a dog that chased cars. Now you probably think I need some serious help with my own mental and emotional condition because my life is so bland that I listen to a guy talking about dogs on a Saturday afternoon even though I do not have and do not want a dog. I love dogs and I have had a lot of them. I have seen dogs chase cars and I have had dogs of my own that chased cars.



## Why dogs chase cars

But honestly I was just riding along in my car and this guy was only background noise until that person called in and wanted to know why dogs chase cars.

This is what he told the person that called in to the radio program. He went into a big discussion of the psychology of dogs chasing cars and why they keep on doing it. He said that the reason they chase cars is because when a car comes into their area they want to protect their borders so they bark, chase the car, and it soon disappears. All of this behavior affirms to the dog that it did the right thing because the car is gone. Now I wondered how he knew that and then I thought well why did I not know that? I am assuming that he has had several conversations with car chasing dogs and that is how he figured all of this out.

I turned the radio off and drove on down the road to a meeting I was supposed to be at thinking about this

guy's insights into dogs chasing cars. I thought so the dogs feel good about themselves because they run the cars off and they are in charge of their area again. I thought about how humanistic that is and how maybe this fellow was applying human psychology to the canine world.

I do know that we human beings make decisions and carryout actions that may lead us to think that we did the right thing. For instance, just think about all of the things at church that get done and people, maybe individuals or groups, think that is the way we need it to be. It could be things like running the preacher off or someone forcefully demanding their way about something that is almost meaningless. Whatever the issue is it goes away and we prance back to our porch thinking that we did the right thing and it was a good thing.

**Now here is the problem. Just because you do something that gets results and you convince**

**yourself to feel good about it does not necessarily mean that it was the best thing or the right thing.** Sometimes the passing of time tells a different story. For instance, in the case of a church just dismissing a pastor because he is not thought well of by the right people may have sad and serious consequences as the years go by. As a rule, not all of the time, but generally speaking when this kind of action is taken very little thought is given to the consequences, the implications, and the impact that will be made on the children, the wife, the enlarged family of the pastor, and on the lives of the people in the church. It should never be done lightly and never be done without respect and grace. Even then the hurt can be deep and long.

**This brings me to another fact about dogs chasing cars and that is your success may in time hold destruction within it.** How many dogs have been run over, killed, and left on the side of the road because they had become so good at chasing cars that certainly nothing would ever harm them? It is not a good thing to keep chasing your successes even when they look beneficial.

The old question comes to the forefront about car chasing dogs. What would he do if he caught it? Well, most of the time what they do is die. But they cannot figure all of that out and sometimes those of us, who own some of them, cannot figure it out. So here is one final thought. **It might be a far better thing to be a failure at car chasing than to be successful at it.**

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mccb.org](mailto:jfutral@mccb.org).



## Growing Churches Conference

July 27-28, 2012

Temple Baptist Church, Hattiesburg



Register Now at the Growing Churches link from [www.mhcb.org](http://www.mhcb.org).

A few of the other leaders: Trevin Wax, Eddie Jones, Cosme Arana, Jonathan Rodgers, David Michci, Larry LeBlanc, Frank & Sandra Gunn, Don and Judy Hicks, Peter Swan, Dionne Williams, David Rogers, Angie Boydston, Huey Dedmon, Marcus Peagler, Mark McArthur, Mark Roberts, Josh Braddy, Tom Crocker, Dan Drennen, Ken Hall, Glenn Shows, Kately Young

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Jim Didiak

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## Bible Drills



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## BIBL i O C I P H E R

GXS EA PGWS IXOZ OEAC, WO WP XZO

TZH KZI OZ BXZM OEA OWCAP ZH OEA

PAGPZXP, MEWDF OEA TGOEAH EGOE

LIO WX EWP ZMX LZMAH.

GDOP ZXA: PANA

Clue: O=T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Twenty: Twenty-nine

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the mes-

sage segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

## MORE SBC

cont. from p. 4

the resolutions process," he told reporters.

"We just felt like we wanted to affirm our commitment to the Baptist Faith and Message as our unifying confession of faith," he told reporters. "Southern Baptists are going to have to agree on the essentials. We're going to have to disagree on certain things, but what we really want to do is lock arms and fight the darkness."

"We want to lock arms and cooperate to win the nations to Christ, to win our communities, to make a difference for Jesus, to push back the darkness with the light of Jesus, and that's really what we think most Southern Baptists would like to focus on."

The resolution on cooperation and the doctrine of salvation gained approval without any verbal opposition expressed from the floor, but debate on the measure on a sinner's prayer consumed much of the 30 minutes allotted for the morning report, necessitating an afternoon report.

The resolution, which survived two amendment efforts, affirmed the concept of a sinner's prayer while reiterating the belief that "repentance from sin and personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are necessary for salvation."

It said such a "crying out for mercy and a calling on the Lord," which constitute what is often described as a sinner's prayer, are a "biblical expression of repentance and faith."

The resolution also said "a sinner's prayer is not an incantation that results in salvation merely by its recitation and should never be manipulatively employed or utilized apart from a clear articulation of the Gospel."

It also urged Southern Baptists to continue to take the Gospel to sinners of "every tribe, tongue, and language."

Two African-American pastors — Dwight McKissic of Cornerstone Church in Arlington, Texas, and Eric Richmond of Reformation Alive Church in Temple Hills, Md. — submitted the resolution objecting to misappropriating civil rights language in the cause of legalizing same-sex marriage.

The resolution provides encouragement to black pastors, said Kevin Smith, an African American who was a member of the committee. Smith is pastor of Watson Memorial Church in Louisville, Ky., and assistant professor of Christian preaching at Southern Theological Seminary.

"During this season, black pastors will have to speak about this issue in a way that white pastors won't," Smith said at the news conference. Referring to President Obama's recently announced support for gay marriage, Smith said, "They'll speak against the first black president and his personal views on marriage while affirming biblical authority."

Black pastors already are taking a clear stand on the issue, but "it's just good to have the affirma-



**ATTENDING CONVENTION** — Bobby McKay (seated, third from left), pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville, poses June 18 with wife Amy (standing, second from left) and daughters Mary Lawrence (left) and Lydia, for caricatures drawn by former Mississippi pastor Joe McKeever, cartoonist and evangelist who recently retired as missions director for New Orleans Association. The McKays were attending the Southern Baptist Convention's 2012 annual meeting at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. (BP photo)

tion of your brothers and sisters" in the denomination, Smith said.

The resolution on the use of civil rights rhetoric on the same sex marriage issue was "beautifully crafted," Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, told reporters. "I think it's important that the largest Protestant denomination in the country made it clear where they stand on this issue."

Part of the resolution on religious freedom urged Obama to tell his administration to back down from its requirement that health plans cover contraceptives, including ones that can cause abortions and sterilizations. It also called for a sufficient exemption for all people and organizations with a religious objection.

It "is so important that our people understand and that the country understand that this debate is not about reproductive freedom. This is about religious freedom," said Land. "It's about all people of faith and whether or not the government can coerce them to pay for that which they find unconscionable."

Seventeen resolutions were submitted to the committee for consideration.

### Motions

Messengers offered 19 motions, all but one of which were referred to SBC entities or ruled out of order.

A motion by Richard Tribble of Emmanuel Southern Church in Decatur, Ill., to prohibit messengers from using a platform microphone when debating motions or making nominations was defeated on a show of ballots.

Tribble said during debate on his motion that requiring all

speakers to use floor microphones would increase the fairness of convention deliberations.

Stan Buckley, chairman of the SBC Committee on Order of Business, argued that the convention's rules for debate and nominations were already fair. Requiring all speakers to use floor microphones would "waste the convention's time," he said, adding that nominations already could be made from a platform microphone.

"Think just a moment about the consequences if the convention were to adopt the Tribble motion," Buckley said. "If a messenger were to offer an amendment to a resolution offered by the Resolutions Committee chairman during the resolutions report, the chairman would then have to leave the platform, run around to find somewhere an empty floor microphone, and then wait for the president to find him before being able to give the Resolutions Committee's response to the amendment."

Motions referred to the SBC Executive Committee included:

- that the Executive Committee "be instructed to schedule future annual meetings during the last week of June so as not to conflict with Father's Day," and that it attempt to change the dates of annual meetings already scheduled that conflict with Father's Day. That motion was also submitted by Tribble.

- that SBC meetings be held every two years rather than annually, submitted by Daniel Palmer of Wake Cross Roads Church in Raleigh, N.C.

- that the SBC bylaws be amended to require that nominating speeches for convention officers include at minimum the nominee's name, the office for which he is being nominated, the name of his church and the per-

centage of undesignated receipts given by that church to the Cooperative Program. That motion was also submitted by Tribble.

- that the convention "establish a process and curriculum for properly training and equipping entity trustees" that is preliminary to and separate from the individual agencies' processes of orientation," submitted by David Atchison of Grace Community Church in Nashville.

- that the 2015 SBC annual meeting be moved to Memphis to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Cooperative Program, which was established in Memphis, submitted by Gary Griffiths of New Church Memphis in Memphis.

- that the Executive Committee develop a policy and procedures manual for convention officers, including procedures to investigate allegations of misconduct by officers and remove them from office if necessary. That motion was also submitted by Tribble.

A motion by Brad Atkins of Powdersville First Church in Easley, S.C., that SBC seminaries consider allowing their portion of the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget to be reduced from 21.92% to 21%, and request that the Executive Committee allocate the remaining .92% to the International Mission Board, was referred to the EC and all six seminaries.

A motion by Tim Overton of Halteman Village Church in Muncie, Ind., that LifeWay Christian Resources reconsider its decision to sell the 2011 New International Version of the Bible in its stores, was referred to LifeWay.

The motion asked trustees to allow Paige Patterson and Louis Markos to address trustees on the matter, and it said Patterson and Markos have agreed to speak.

A motion by Richard Sandberg of New Zion Church in Kentwood, La., that the convention ask the North American Mission Board "to reconsider their decision to scale back disaster relief funding" was referred to NAMB.

A motion by Channing Kilgore of South Whitwell Church in Whitwell, Te., that the convention establish a "historical research committee" to study the views of SBC founders "regarding predestination and election and how they understood these terms," was referred to the six seminaries.

The Committee on Order of Business considered a motion from the 2011 annual meeting calling for future meetings to include at least one evening session and reported that attendance data from the New Orleans meeting "will yield more feedback upon which to base plans for future annual meeting programs."

Seven motions were ruled out of order by SBC president Bryant Wright, acting on the recommendation of the Committee on Order of Business. Among them:

- that the convention "seek God for mercy corporately" in light of the moral decline in America, submitted by Dan Biser of Zoar Church in Augusta, W.Va. Buckley explained that messengers had already adopted the convention's agenda, "which includes time for prayer."

- that the convention agree with Richard Land that statements he made regarding the Trayvon Martin killing were harmful and that the convention "publicly affirm the reprimands" of Land by ERLC trustees, submitted by Todd Littleton of Snow Hill Church in Tuttle, Ok.

Littleton appealed the chair's ruling, but messengers sustained the chair.

- that the convention ask its newly elected president to study imprecatory prayer in the Bible and report his findings at the 2013 annual meeting, submitted by Wiley Drake of First Southern Church in Buena Park, Ca.

- that the referral of a motion concerning biennial SBC meetings be reconsidered, submitted by Palmer.

- that salary packages of all SBC entity and state convention employees be disclosed to Southern Baptists and that annual salaries be capped at \$150,000, submitted by Luke Johnson of Highland Church in Laurel.

- that the SBC president appoint a committee to audit NAMB's Mega-Focus Cities: San Diego program, submitted by Ron Wilson of Wynnbrook Church in Columbus, Ga.

- that "no entity of the SBC be allowed to use the name Great Commission," submitted by Steve Bailey of Earle (Ar.) Church.

- that the convention commend Billy Graham "for his continued burden for evangelism and his love for Jesus Christ" and pray for the success of his My Hope with Billy Graham outreach campaign, submitted by Jim Wood of Covenant Community Church in Sevierville, Tenn.



## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Sauls Valley Church, Monticello:** Revival, July 8 - 11; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon service; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Joey Faulk, speaker; Maurice Rutland, music.

► **New Life Fellowship, Oakland:** Revival, July 8 - 11; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 4 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Larry Wicker, speaker.

► **Friendship Church, McComb:** Revival, July 8 - 10; Sun., 10:45 a.m., followed by lunch and 1 p.m.; Mon. - Tue., 7 p.m. with revival choir at 6:30 p.m.; Tim Parker, speaker; Tom

Walsh, music; Laverne Sumner, pastor.

► **Bond Church, Stone County:** Homecoming, July 1, 11 a.m.; Bill Taylor, speaker; Steve Jackson, music; John Bullen, pastor; concert by The Red Roots.

► **Heucks Retreat, Brookhaven:** Homecoming, July 15; services, 10 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Casey Williams, speaker; Dale Heard, music.

► **Goodwater Church, Smith County:** Homecoming and cemetery meeting, July 8; services, 11 a.m., followed by

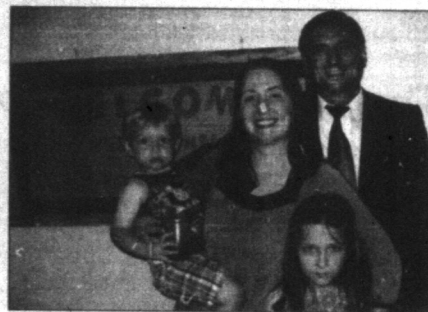
covered dish lunch and cemetery association meeting; Pete Pearson, speaker.

► **Zion Church, Pontotoc:** 175th anniversary celebration, July 14 - 15; Sat., 10:30 a.m., fellowship, lunch, and recognition of former staff; Sun., services, 10 a.m., followed by potluck lunch; David Lee, speaker; Johnny Eubanks, music.

► **Moak's Creek Church, Lincoln County:** Revival, July 8 - 11; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon service; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Wayne Hudson, speaker; Pat Rice, music; Mike Alexander, pastor.

## Staff Changes

**OLD HEBRON CHURCH, NEWHEBRON,** has called Terry Phillips as pastor, shown with Andrea, Samantha, and Perry.



## College News



Sixty-one nursing students from the three **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** campuses were formally inducted into the Upsilon Theta Chapter 462 of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing on June 16 in Wilkes Dining Hall on the Hattiesburg campus. Sigma Theta Tau is the only recognized Honor Society of Nursing, inviting members based on academic and professional excellence. Upsilon Theta Chapter 462, chartered in 2007, is sponsored by the Joseph and Nancy Fails School of Nursing at WCU. Shown are some of the students.

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## The Decision Dare • Joshua 24:14-25

This week's lesson concludes Unit 1: Profile in Courage. The Study Theme is Character at the Crossroads. Adults have been challenged to display courage in accepting a series of dares designed to draw them closer to the LORD and make them effective witnesses for Christ. To date, we have looked at the Leadership Dare, the Faith Dare, the Accountability Dare, and the Loyalty Dare. The Book of Joshua has provided various character studies as we have contemplated these dares. This week we are challenged to take the Decision Dare.

The goal of this week's lesson is to help adults dare to decide about living in covenant relationship with the LORD. Accepting the dare is no easy task because to truly understand the dare is to make a life-long commitment to live for God and by His standards.

**1. Take Your Stand (Josh. 24:14-15)** As Joshua entered the twilight years of his life, he felt compelled to assemble all Israel at Shechem to take one last stand for the LORD. His stand included a two-fold plea. First, he challenged the people to "fear the LORD and serve Him with all faithfulness" (24:14a; NIV). Second, he implored them to "throw away" their ancestors' gods from the regions of Mesopotamia and Egypt (14:14b).

Joshua realized he could not make the people follow his command, nor would he be around much longer to en-

force his wishes. Therefore, he gave the people a choice. If serving the LORD seemed undesirable they could choose to serve the Mesopotamian gods, or even the Amorite's gods. The term Amorite referred in a general way to the indigenous people of Canaan left behind after the conquest.

Then Joshua took a courageous stand. Even if the people decided to go after false gods, he would not go with them. With great boldness he said, "I and my household, we will serve the LORD" (25:15b; MT). The syntax in Hebrew is emphatic.

What about us? Do we have the courage to take our stand for the LORD? In an increasingly pluralistic and secular America, we need to stand up and say emphatically, "I and my family, we will serve the LORD!"

**2. Refuse Shallow Commitment (Josh. 24:16-18)** The people responded to Joshua's bold stand by denying they would ever forsake the LORD (24:16). They then buttressed their response by recounting God's sal-

vific acts on their behalf, the Exodus, the plagues and provisions, and protection from enemy nations (24:17). The people also acknowledged the LORD's role in driving out the nations during the conquest (24:18a).

Then, in the strongest faith affirmation of all,

they accepted the Decision Dare. They exhibited courage by deciding to live in covenant relationship with the LORD.

LORD by stating, "We too will serve the LORD" (24:18b; NIV). Perhaps the most important part of their decision was their reason for deciding to serve the LORD, "because He is our God." They refused to make a shallow commitment.

**3. Count the Cost (Josh. 24:19-25)** Joshua's response at first seemed less than enthusiastic and even discouraging. He told the people they were "not able to serve the LORD" (24:19; NIV). During his lifetime Joshua had witnessed many occasions where the covenant community had turned their backs on God. Accepting the Decision Dare meant more than

making a verbal response at a special gathering. The Shechem convention would soon end; people would return to the regular routines of their lives. Would they serve the LORD a "holy" and "jealous" God? Joshua reminded the people, God would not forgive their on-going rebellion and sins if they lapsed on their covenant commitments and turned to other gods (24:19b-20). Joshua wanted to be sure the people had counted the cost of following the LORD.

The people reaffirmed their commitment to serve the LORD (24:21). Convinced of their seriousness, Joshua informed them they were "witnesses against" themselves if they reneged on their commitments. Then, Joshua challenged the people to combine action to faith by putting away the foreign gods among them and to yield their hearts to the LORD (24:23).

The people's twin commitments to "serve the LORD" and to "obey Him" are expressed emphatically in the Hebrew text. The people meant business! Joshua proceeded to make a covenant between the people and the LORD. Their commitment meant following covenant "decrees and laws" (24:25; NIV). We too should count the costs of accepting Jesus and living for Him. Let's take the Decision Dare.

VanHorn is dean of Christian Studies at Mississippi College, Clinton.



### Explore the Bible

with W. Wayne VanHorn

## Free • John 16:5-15

Only a bonafide, card carrying preacher's kid (I qualify) can truly appreciate this little story, one of my all-time favorites. The pastor noticed that his own son and several playmates had gathered quietly under the huge shade tree in the backyard of the parsonage. Curious at their silence, he walked over to see what was going on. A dead bird was resting on the ground next to an empty tennis shoe box. The kids had borrowed his shovel from the shed to dig the birdie a grave. He watched with interest as two of them tenderly picked up the dearly departed robin red breast, carefully laid it inside the box and gently closed the lid. When they bowed their little heads, the pastor reverently followed suit. Imagine his delight as he heard his child repeating what he had surely (thought he'd) heard his daddy declare at the ending of "people" funerals: "Glory be to the Father...and to the Son...and...into the hole he goes."

During the month of July, we will be learning about the work of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God continues to accomplish His divine purpose. He calls us to salvation. He gives us victory over sin. He empowers us for service and prayer. He grants

us wisdom and understanding of His Word. He confirms confidence in our eternal relationship with God through Christ. First, we will discover that we are enslaved to sin and desperately need to be free.

God the Father made each of us. God the Son was sent to become one of us.

God the Holy Spirit was sent to dwell inside those of us who believe. God sent Jesus. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives all glory to Jesus.

Jesus returns all glory to His Father. I choose to call this glorious truth "the circle of eternal life." Jesus left the glory of Heaven to come to the gory of Earth. He limited Himself to a human body so that He could live a sinless life and so that He could experience physical death in order to conquer death forever. Before He left Earth to return to Heaven, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to dwell inside believers. Not limited to a human body,

the Holy Spirit can be fully alive inside each person who says yes to Jesus.

Before salvation, the Holy Spirit draws us to come to God. At salvation, the Holy Spirit declares us to be sons of God, joint heirs with Christ. After salvation, the Holy Spirit grows us toward the likeness of God.

In John 16:5, Jesus reminds the disciples that He is soon to be returning to the One Who sent Him to Earth.

Then in

John 16:7, Jesus promises to send them The Helper. The definition of this word for "sent" and "send" (past and future) means to dispatch one on an important errand. God sent Jesus to live and die and live again. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help us die to ourselves and live forever with Him in Heaven. The word translated Helper is "paraklaytos." "Para" means beside and "klaytos" means called. Believers are never alone. The Helper is here.

### Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



In John 16, Jesus declares that God will employ the Holy Spirit to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. He convicts us to understand that we are sinners in need of a Savior. He convicts us to realize that righteousness is defined by Jesus, the One Who shed His blood and gave His life as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He convicts us of the awareness that judgment has already come for Satan, the arch-enemy of the cross. Judgment will come to all those who refuse to believe. The Holy Spirit of truth will guide us to all truth. He will speak only what God the Father tells Him to speak. He will return all glory to Jesus. Convicted. Convinced. Confirmed. Completed.

The most incredible car cannot win the race without an engine. Those dinner rolls will not rise properly without yeast. Electrical appliances will sit idle until they are plugged into a power source. People who choose to refuse the Holy Spirit are called unbelievers. People who choose to invite Him inside are called believers. Would you be free from your burden of sin? God the Holy Spirit says you can be! Are you listening?

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.



## Truth or Consequences • Lesson Passages: Judges 2:11-22

In this week's lesson, we transition from the emphasis on the conquest and allotment of the land (Book of Joshua) to life in the land under the judges (Book of Judges). We are struck by the two realities when reading Judges 1-2. First, though the Israelites had conquered the land, not all the original inhabitants had been dislodged. Their continued presence in the land guaranteed on-going military challenges and temptations to religious syncretism for Israel. Second, the contrast between God's covenant faithfulness and Israel's covenant infidelity are juxtaposed in the sharpest way. The purpose of this lesson is to examine Israel's unfaithfulness, then to note how unfaithfulness has negative consequences. When we face crises or moments of weakness that tempt us to sin against the Lord, we can demonstrate fidelity to the Lord by recognizing unfaithfulness has dire consequences. God will allow us to suffer the punishment of our own rebellion. Yet, God never abandons us. His discipline is corrective and nurturing. He seeks to get us back on the right track.

Judges 2:7-10 notes the people's covenant faithfulness all of Joshua's days and the elders who outlived him. Tragically, a pattern of sin and judgment characterized life in the Promised Land after the death of Joshua's generation.

**1. Spiritual Adultery (Judg. 2:11-13,17)** The major sin Israel incurred was the sin of idolatry or spiritual adultery. They served the Baals (2:11), the Ashtoreths (2:13), and various other pagan gods (2:12,17). Generally speaking, Baal was the storm god. He controlled the rain. His female consort was the goddess Ashtaroth. Together, they controlled the fertility of the land. As the Israelites transitioned from being nomads to becoming farmers, they were enticed to engage in the religion of "the peoples around them" (2:12; NIV). At best they syncretized their worship of the Lord with their worship of Baal and Ashtaroth; at worst they abandoned the Lord altogether. The plural terms, Baals and Ashtoreths, indicate the many nuances of the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth, with various villages placing different emphases on their worship of these gods. In essence, as the Israelites planted their crops, they worshiped Yahweh, but they "hedged their bets" by worshiping Baal and Ashtaroth also. To the Lord this was spiritual adultery.

Explore the Bible  
with W. Wayne VanHorn

**2. Spiritual Discipline (Judg. 2:14-15)** God's reaction to Israel's infidelity is described in human-like (anthropomorphic) terms; "his anger" (2:14; NIV) or "the hand of the Lord was against them" (2:15; NIV). The net result was the empowerment of Israel's enemies. Without divine protection the Israelites were "plundered," "sold into the hands of their enemies," and "no longer able to resist" (2:14). As a consequence they continually faced "defeat" and were in "great distress" (2:15).

**3. Divine Compassion (Judg. 2:16,18)** God sought more to discipline His people in a corrective way than to merely punish them. He raised up empowered leaders who could lead the people to victory. These leaders were savvy and wise. We know them by the title "judges."

Because the Lord "raised up" the judges, they were able to save the Israelites "out of the hands of these raiders" (2:16). The Lord was "with the judge" (2:18). Consequently, the judge was able to deliver the people out of

the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived. None of this was possible however except for the fact of God's compassion. When He heard the "groaning" of His people under those who oppressed and afflicted them (2:18), He relented from chastising them by raising up judges to deliver them. The people's groaning included expressions of contrition, words of repentance, and cries for deliverance.

**4. Divine Testing (Judg. 2:19-22)** As is often the case with us, Israel did not learn their lesson. When the judge died, they sinned again and became "even more corrupt" (2:19; NIV). The pattern began all over again. Some years ago my mentor, Dr. George Harrison, taught me the acronym S.W.O.R.D. for remembering the pattern of sin and judgment in Judges. The people SINNED (S), incurring God's WRATH (W). God raised up OPPRESSORS (O) to chastise His people. Eventually the people REPENTED (R). Then, God compassionately DELIVERED (D) His people. This pattern can be observed throughout Judges. Thus, the people in the land were left by the Lord to test His people. The lesson teaches us to demonstrate fidelity to the Lord because not doing so has dire consequences. We can live by the truth or suffer the consequences.

VanHorn is dean of Christian Studies at Mississippi College, Clinton.

## Victorious • Romans 7:13-8:11

Last week, we read the blood red words of our Lord recorded in the 16th chapter of the gospel of John. Jesus was a few hours away from Calvary. In John 13, we read that Judas Iscariot left the Upper Room with two very clean feet. His mind was firmly set on his plan to betray the Suffering Servant who had tenderly washed them shortly after supper. Better to eat, THEN run maybe?! I am always sad to remember that Judas missed hearing Jesus speak of the Comforter in John 14, the Gardener of John 15 or The Helper of John 16. Judas did not witness the high priestly prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17. Judas reappears in the Garden of Gethsemane in John 18, leading a cohort of Roman soldiers. He watches as Jesus steps forward and hears Him boldly ask, "Whom do you seek?" After planting that deadly, prearranged kiss of identification, Judas went out and hanged himself in complete despair.

This week, as we study about the power of God the Holy Spirit from the book of Romans chapters seven and eight, we hear the apostle Paul asking the same question: "Whom do you seek?" When you need victory, on whom do you rely? Paul was not

in the Upper Room with Jesus and the disciples. He missed that supper by thirty years or so. When Paul finally came to the altar of the Living Sacrifice, he was determined to hang his old life so he could live his victorious new one. But it was a struggle. Every day, Paul needed The Helper. If we desire to be victorious, we also need The same Helper.

God appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. The Holy Spirit was calling a man who was so brilliant and so well-schooled in the Word of God and the Law of Moses that he could have written Cliff Notes on the entire Old Testament with his scroll and quill tied behind his back. Our true heart condition is revealed by our head knowledge and our mind set. Paul had "set his mind" to obey God's law and see that everyone else did too, including the believers in the early church. Paul could have invented

the quote, "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with facts."

Trying to live the Christian life without the power of the Holy Spirit is a complete waste of time and eternity. You cannot earn your salvation by "doing good deeds" any more than you could keep on "doing enough deeds"

to maintain it! Salvation and personal growth are not based on your strength. Just as Jesus' death on the cross is your one

and only hope for salvation, the Holy Spirit is your one and only hope for victory in living it out day by day. Paul's problem proves our solution. Paul has a severe case of "I" trouble. "I" "me" "my" dominate the closing verses of chapter seven which ends in despair.

The questions of chapter seven are answered in chapter eight. The want-to and can't do and the should do but won't do battle must end in Christ Does! We will fail here and there and

suffer consequences as long as we live, but we are not condemned if we are "in Christ." We must determine daily to walk after (seek, pursue) the Spirit and run (speed away) from the flesh.

Prisoners of war in ancient days were tied inescapably to the corpse of fallen soldiers. Escape was virtually impossible. Every step taken had to support your body as well as the dead weight of the body tightly tethered to you. Face to face with death spiritually is just as much of a burden. God alone can free us to live in victory over the things that bind us. The comedian Flip Wilson always blamed his sin on "the devil made me do it!!" Adam and Eve introduced us to that strategy. We have been hiding behind that worthless game ever since Eden. There are two sides in the war: flesh vs. Spirit. A long time ago, I decided which side I knew I wanted to be on. On the days when I rely on the Spirit, I win. On the days when I release the power of fleshly self, I lose. Winning with the Spirit brings honor to the family name. Losing with the flesh gives the victory to the enemy.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

## Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



## Just for the Record



Gaye Williamson, **FIRST CHURCH, CHARLESTON**, has retired after 18 years as pianist. Shown are pastor John Price, Williamson, Jeanette Keyser, and Karen Clements.

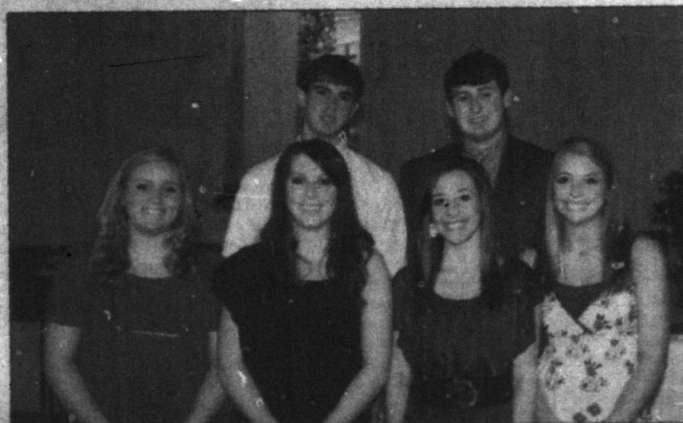


Graduates Laken Rimes and Emily Alford, **PROGRESS CHURCH, MCCOMB**, were presented Bibles by pastor Bob Lynch.



Mark and Gail McArthur, of **GOSS CHURCH, COLUMBIA**, were presented a trip to the Holy Land after 25 years of service. McArthur served as minister of music and pastor. They are shown on the Sea of Galilee.

**FIRST CHURCH, OLOH**, recognizes its graduates. Front row: Natalee Baggett, Alyssa Brand, Taryn Graham, and Emily Cobia; back row, Stosch Powell and Caleb Morris.



**OLD HEBRON CHURCH, NEWHEBRON**, recognized graduates Clayton Giles and Abigali McDaniel, shown with interim pastor Michael Giles.



**MIDWAY CHURCH, PONTOTOC**, recently held a baby dedication. Shown are pastor Tommy Tackett, Justin and Stephanie Price with Wesson and sibling Adebyn, and Josh and Banji Taylor with Cruse and sibling Addie-Grayce.



**AT LEFT:** An ordination service for Matthew Wayne Martin was held at **FIRST CHURCH, YAZOO CITY**. He is shown with his wife, Melanie; the couple have a daughter; Baylee Grace.

**AT RIGHT:** **PROGRESS CHURCH, MCCOMB**, licensed Connor Alford to the ministry June 10. He is shown, right, with Bob Lynch.



### In other Church News:

► **First Church, Terry**, recently exceeded its goal of \$5750 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering by collecting a final total of \$6,099.25.

► **New Life Fellowship, Oakland**, will have their 10 year celebration of being in their church building July 15. Service, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered-dish lunch.

► **Brierwood Drive Church, Jackson**, will show the movie, *Courageous*, July 14, 6:30 p.m. A community festival will precede the showing at 5 p.m. with games for children and food for the entire family. A four-week *Courageous Living Bible study* will begin the following week (time TBA).